# The Shakespeare Newsletter

VOL. 1, No. 6 *"Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me . . ."* November, 1951

# FOLGER LIBRARY OFFERS TWO $1000 PRIZES

## Awards To Be Made in Literature and History

TO stimulate and encourage creative and non-pedantic scholarship at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C., Louis B. Wright, Director of the Library, has announced prizes of $1,000 each for the two best book length manuscripts submitted for publication. One of the important requirements for both prizes is that "a substantial portion of the research upon the books submitted must have been carried on in the Folger Library."

**Literature and Drama Prize**

Although the prizes are not being awarded specifically for Shakespearean study, a broad latitude of activity is offered in practically every field of Shakespearean research. The $1,000 prize in this area of study specifies a "manuscript of a book in the field of English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, or in the history of the English drama and theatre of the eighteenth century, or in the interpretation of Shakespeare, and the history of his reputation and the performance of his plays in any period." The Shakespearean resources of the Folger Shakespeare Library are so extensive that infinite possibilities are conceivable. Manuscripts in this field must be mailed to the Director of the Library not later than October 1, 1954.

**English Renaissance Prize**

The second $1,000 prize is offered "for the best manuscript of a book submitted in the history of English civilization in the period between 1500 and 1700. Books dealing with any aspect of the cultural history of this period will be eligible." Manuscripts in this section should be mailed to the Director of the Library not later than October 1, 1953.

Louis B. Wright declared that "Too much scholarly publication today gives the appearance of having been written for no discernable audience. We hope that scholars working in the Folger Library will produce works of interpretation or contributions to knowledge which have vitality, relevance, and genuine significance, so well written that these books will be read by others besides specialists in the field."

Judges of the contest will be a committee to be chosen by the Library authorities in addition to Louis B. Wright and the President of Amherst College, acting *ex officio*.

The Folger Library reserves the right to reject all manuscripts if none is regarded as worthy of a prize or to extend the time limit for submitting manuscripts Although the Library will not necessarily guarantee publication, it reserves the right to publish the prize books if it so desires.

## *Shakespeare's Role in Early Western Culture Revealed*

Professor Levette J. Davidson, Chairman of the English Department at the University of Denver, in Denver, Colorado, presented a paper on "Shakespeare in the Rockies" at the annual meeting of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association in Boulder, Colorado, on October 19th. A précis of the paper prepared by the author especially for readers of *The Shakespeare Newsletter* follows:

**Shakespeare in the Rockies**

"The history of Shakespearean productions, school study, lectures, general reading, and critical commentary in the Rocky Mountain area, as in many other American regions, reflects local developments in general culture from the frontier crudities of pioneer times to the mature activities of today. Even in the mining communities of the gold rush period, a taste for Shakespeare was regarded as the best touchstone by which the degree of civilization could be measured. Many amusing anecdotes have survived concerning the reactions to Shakespeare of naive readers, theatre patrons, and reviewers who voiced their criticisms with the originality and the freedom characteristic of the Far West.

"The first recorded Shakespearean production in the Rockies was a performance of *Othello* in the Social Hall of Salt Lake City, March 2, 1856, with a cast of local talent. One of the most unusual took place in Denver on July 27, 1861, when a local gambler appeared as the lead in *Hamlet*, on a bet that no one could play that part after only three day's study.

"Perhaps the briefest review of a Tabor Opera House performance was the following contributed by Eugene Field to the Denver *Tribune* after the friends of the actor had exacted Gene's promise not to say anything unpleasant: "Rev. Geo. W. Milne played *Hamlet* at the Opera House last night. They played it until eleven o'clock." Of another actor, he wrote: "He played the king as if he feared someone was going to play the ace."

"During the sixties Colorado had its 'Golden Circuit,' on which troupes of actors toured the mining camps by stagecoach. By 1880 a 'Silver Circuit' was organized with famous companies going by train to most of the larger cities in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Shakespeare's plays were given more frequently than those of any other dramatist."

Prof. Stuart Cuthbertson of the University of Colorado is President of the RMMLA which publishes a quarterly *News Bulletin*.

## SHAKESPEARE AND JOYCE

At the annual meeting of the South-Central Modern Language Association which met at Louisiana State University last October 20th, Professor William Peery of the University of Texas read a paper on "The Sources of Joyce's Shakespeare Criticism."

Prof. Peery's interest in Joyce and Shakespeare was shown in *SNL's* April abstract of his article on "Shakhisbeard at Finnegan's Wake." The article was printed in full in the University of Texas *Studies in English* for 1951. An abstract of the SCMLA paper sent to *The Shakespeare Newsletter* by the author follows:

"Principally because of 321 allusions to Shakespeare in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Joyce scholars have tended to regard Joyce as something of a Shakespeare student and critic. They speak of the 'profound hold' that Shakespeare had on Joyce's mind and of Joyce's detailed knowledge of Shakespeare, which they trace to his study of Shakespeare as an undergraduate and to his alleged wide reading in Shakespeare's works.

"Analysis of the Shakespearean content of *Ulysses*, however, reveals that almost all of it is derived, not from reading Shakespeare, but from reading three books about Shakespeare, those of Sir Sidney Lee, George Brandes and Frank Harris. Joyce's greatest debt is clearly to the least reputable of the three, Harris. The Shakespeare of Stephen Dedalus is thus seen to be largely not a creation of Joyce but the mythical Shakespeare of Harris, beautified with Brandes' feathers."

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## *The Magic of Shakespeare*

Several years ago your editor met Dr. Henry W. Wells of Columbia University on the Subway. From a bulging briefcase he soon brought forth a large volume—a typescript of the yet unpublished *Mystery of Hamlet* eloquently described elsewhere on this page. As we leafed through the volume the exact words of Dr. Wells' ecstatic praise of Percy Mackaye and his work were forgotten, but a remark from his review in *The Saturday Review of Literature* when the work was later published is of great significance. Mackaye's "high seriousness," he wrote, "is supported by unmistakable powers to deal with generalized concepts and with the heroic emotions that *bind together humanity* in time and make the existence of classics a reality." That this remark is as true of Shakespeare as it is of Mackaye is a tribute to the living author.

The cultural history of the last 350 years clearly reveals how the study of Shakespeare has bound together humanity. And now the original and the reflected glory of Mackaye's tetralogy have produced the same magic.

Bolstered by his own faith and the faith of enthusiastic admirers, Bond Wheelwright became a publisher to print *The Mystery of Hamlet.* On faith alone Mr. and Mrs. Wheelwright and some friends labored to produce a beautiful Folio the sale of which would make a popular edition possible. When James Ross Boothe, poet-friend of Mackaye, inherited some money, his first thought was to make the Folio a reality. Both editions are now available. Such is the magic that stems from the inspiration of Shakespeare.

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# *THE STORY BEHIND HAMLET'S GHOST*

by I. A. SALOMON

NEARLY two years ago THE MYSTERY OF HAMLET, KING OF DENMARK, Or What We Will, by Percy MacKaye was published in a de luxe limited edition of 357 copies. This unprecedented publication was created to make possible popular priced editions. Over fifty years of concentration, struggle, frustration and writing on the part of the author barely begin to tell the story of this gargantuan literary effort. Was it worth it?

To approach this work with skepticism, soon allayed, and then to be overwhelmed by the architectural grandeur of this tetralogy is to acknowledge that a superb poet has written a monumental work. This Mr. MacKaye has achieved in four poetic plays that purport to reveal the forces beyond the unfathomed inwardness that makes Prince Hamlet the protagonist of the greatest play in literature. Only a genius or a mountebank would dare set his writing against that of William Shakespeare, but Mr. MacKaye with extraordinary perception has written a valid and salient drama on the passions and motives inhabiting man. In the grand manner of the Elizabethans, he exploits the legend with insight and power, and adapts his language to the mighty line in startling idiom and compulsive imagery, all this in no imitation of the master-spirit of that age. He has re-created language as no piddling imitator could effect. The tetralogy begins thirty years before the *Hamlet* and culminates in the opening scene of that play. Aside from the doom that overcomes the kingly household, Mr. MacKaye's creation rests on the theme of the consciousness of man to his responsibilities as a human being. The universal solvent, Comte says, is Will. Since man is the conscience of the universe, he has it within him to purge his mortal grossness; in this sense, the tetralogy is true to its subtitle, *What We Will.*

These plays make first-rate theatre. (All four—The Ghost of Elsinore, The Fool in Eden Garden, Odin Against Christus, The Serpent in the Orchard—were brilliantly produced in Pasadena in 1949.) The art in them is compelling, the dramatic incidents remarkably varied, the dominant and subordinate characters admirably viable, and the plot a drama of disordered ills. The Ghost of Elsinore becomes flesh and blood and Yorick's skull a full-grown man carrying Price Hamlet pig-a-back. Yorick is invested with a Touchstone wit that makes him at once an enduring character rather than a memorable skull, and Mr. MacKaye does not impeach that masterstroke of Shakespeare by bringing the court jester to life. Yorick endures his grief as his child, Angela, is seduced and murdered by Claudius, and at his own tragic end, he is superseded by Mol' Cowslip, midwife to the children born in the palace, and later flounced jester to the queen. The events that transmute King Hamlet and Claudius into gigantic tragic figures are tensions leading gradually to the seduction of Gertrude, so that the final catastrophe drags these lives down in their inner corruption, and subliminal forces work at the vitals of the prince. Neither Claudius nor his brother can overcome their primitive instincts. King Hamlet, a basically good man, cannot absorb the counsel of Gallucinius, that all-wise guiding spirit, who is both God and demon in the lives of the brothers. Padre Celestino, who embodies th Christian principls of love, humility, and virtue, cannot keep them from their self-imposed disaster. The drama mounts to a tremendous climax as King Hamlet returns from Norway to find Claudius and Gertrude entertaining the court in orgiastic revelry. There is no scene more powerful than this, that is followed by the mental disintegration of the king, who plots his brother's destruction, only to die by the self-same plan.

The poetry Mr. MacKaye brings to the saga is all wonder and light, and nowhere more apparent than in the love-scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia. The plays are interspersed with songs written in folk idiom for which musical notation has been given. Lyrics throughout have the pure breath of music in them.

The modern reader may be apprehensive if he merely glances at specimen pages of this Hamlet Cycle. Individual passages cannot give the integrated synthesis of this amazing book. After a half-century of writing, Mr. MacKaye has achieved a brilliant masterpiece.

*(I. L. Salomon's poetry and criticism have appeared in The American Scholar, SRL, New Yorker, etc.)*

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## *Miscellany*

ARTHUR HEINE'S reply to M.R.T.'s NYTimes query on Shakespeare's puns mentions that a lecture by Dr. Batger at Wimbledon, England, in 1923, noted Shakespeare's use of 1,000 puns. Your editor believes there are many more and would appreciate correspondence or an article on the subject . . . WORTHINGTON MINER'S comment that Shakespeare is "the only complete master of good style and good form in television. He needs nothing but cutting," worries JOHN CROSBY, NYHerald Tribune's *Radio and TV* columnist. He wonders how "Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall" *(M for M)* will please soap opera fans; how "he that hath no beard is less than a man" *(Much Ado)* will please razor advertisers; and how "Comparisons are odorous" *(Much Ado)* will be taken by cigarette advertisers who ask us to compare. Shakespeare was too much afflicted with "the naked truth," *(LLL)* . . . Mr. Miner's Oct. 23rd TV production of *Macbeth* starred JUDITH EVELYN and CHARLTON HESTON. Although an hour (including commercials) is much too short for a good performance, this version found time to hack off Macbeth's head with several lusty strokes. Striving for production rather than performance can not create great drama . . . ANTA's production of *Timon of Athens* has been called off because JOSE FERER can not be obtained for the title role . . . A report in T. D. KRAUSE'S *Critical Digest* (505 5th Ave., NYC) noted that theatrical agents were receiving applications for acting jobs from college drama professors last June . . . Dr. JOHN H. H. LYON, professor emeritus at Columbia is offering his third series of lectures on Shakespeare at the YM & YWHA at Lexington Avenue at 92nd St. in NYC . . . JOHN GIELGUD expects to bring a Shakespearean company to the U. S. in 1953. His plans call for an opening on the West coast and a tour across the country with a repertory of *King Lear, A Winter's Tale,* and *Measure for Measure.* The company may give guest performances at LAWRENCE LANGNER'S Globe replica at Westport, Connecticut.

## THE STRATFORD LECTURES

*(Continued from October issue)*

### "SHAKESPEARE AS AN HISTORIAN"

***by Dr. Robert Birley, Headmaster of Eton***

Shakespeare's histories cover a period of history difficult to understand. Richard II was dangerously topical at the time "because of the Essex rebellion and the uncertain succession." "In the 15th and 16th centuries government was based on the divine right of kings, often expressed by Shakespeare but it became a mock when the succession was uncertain and the crown constantly changing, as in the time of the Wars of the Roses." After the accession of Henry VII "loyalty" and "treason" regained meaning and rebellion was only possible by denying the king's right to the throne.

### "SHAKESPEARE'S CRAFTSMANSHIP IN THE ENGLISH HISTORIES"

***by I. A. Shapiro***

The defeat of the Armada and the fears of invasion which existed until 1599 made Shakespeare and others write history plays to arouse the English to patriotism. "There was no evidence for the view that history in his time was State propaganda, for historians wrote then, as now, of the truth as they saw it, in honest judgment, based on their own assumptions. Scientific history could not exist." Rather than invent plots and characters the great artist preferred to accept the challenge of history. In *Richard II* "which was faithful to available history, Shakespeare illustrated the complexity of life and general principles of his later tragedies. Richard's incompetence worked to his ruin, and it was impossible to blame Bolingbroke entirely, for Richard threw up the sponge in advance." In *I HIV* Hotspur and Falstaff are "interested in honour for the wrong reasons . . . but Hal was interested in the right kind of honour and duty, and Shakespeare in the right kind of ruler." *II HIV* was not a second part but a "potboiling" sequel about Falstaff "relying for its appeal on topical jokes and personalities, now lost." The most interesting scene in *HV* was before Agincourt, "but afterwards Shakespeare got 'fed up' with cheap entertainment, and turned to Roman history for his themes."

### "SHAKESPEARE AND THE SUPERNATURAL"

***by W. W. Robson***

It is unnecessary to believe in Shakespeare's supernatural beings in order to enjoy them. Shakespeare had a knowledge of Christianity and a Catholic background, but it is not easy to guess at his religion. *Macbeth* was discussed as an example. This "was a play about supernatural evil leading to Macbeth's identification with evil through unnatural deeds. The natural was regarded as good, holy, fruitful, expressed in order and degree, but evil as non-creative, destroying order, emptying out human significance. If we would understand Shakespeare's use of the supernatural we must respond fully to the world of medieval religion which underlay all his plays."

*(To be continued)*

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# REVIEW of PERIODICALS

### *MEASURE FOR MEASURE* REINTERPRETED

Based on Prof. Oscar J. Campbell's study of *Measure for Measure* in his *Shakespeare's Satire* (1943), MURRAY KRIEGER of the Ohio State University reexamines the play in the light of the Elizabethan concepts of comedy. The play has usually been discussed in relation to 1) the moral inconsistencies such as Isabella's sanction of the Mariana substitution, 2) the inadequacy of the genre which forces tragedy into the mold of comedy, and 3) the dramatic inconsistencies which show Angelo first as without blemish then later as having formerly deserted Mariana. Critics have said the play falls apart after Mariana is introduced even though the play is admired for its concept of justice and mercy. Although Elizabethan theories of comedy were classical—no death or danger in comedy—practice sought to circumvent the limitation. All was subordinated to pleasure and profit. From the classic theories of comedy they derived "primacy of character consistency," purity of genre, and "an attitude of detachment, of disdainful superiority" on the part of the audience. From English pastoral dramatists derived "primacy of fanciful plot," inclusion of "the most tragic possibilities, if all ends well," and a sympathetic concern on the part of the audience. It is this latter concept added to Jonsonian humour characteristics that are combined in *Measure for Measure.* Krieger would modify the idea that the play fails because Isabella outgrows her function of gulling Angelo. *Measure for Measure* is rather a product of "conflicting fashions in dramatic construction." Under the Romance tradition Isabella must withstand Angelo and rebuke her brother, but as an "instrument of Jonsonian intrigue" she must participate in engineering the bed trick. The Duke's delay is a manifestation of the comedy of ridicule in which the gull must be pushed to a point where "his self-exposure is most painful." The mingling of pastoral and humour elements "seems to have obscured any possible single intention in the play." (*"Measure for Measure"* and Elizabethan Comedy," *PLMA,* LXVI:5, pp. 775-84, Sept. 1951.)

### MURDER!

LYSANDER KEMP of the University of Buffalo writes a tradition-shattering article in which he asserts that the reason for the hundreds of "distinguished failures" in *Hamlet* interpretation lies in the fact that Claudius is thought to be the murderer of Hamlet senior. By King Hamlet's own admission, he was asleep in the orchard and is therefore *"not* a witness but merely the oblivious victim." Gertrude's behavior with his lecherous brother makes the elder king *assume* that Claudius is guilty. The play-within-a-play proof of Claudius' guilt is discarded because in it Lucianus, the murderer, is not a *brother* but a *nephew* to the king. Claudius bolts because he visualizes *his* murder contemplated by his own nephew, Prince Hamlet. Claudius' confession of a brother's murder is a ruse made to fool the mad Hamlet whom he knows has just entered the room to kill him. This necessitates moving the stage direction "Enter Hamlet" to the beginning of the King's soliloquy 35 lines earlier, but KEMP asserts that this change "deserves careful consideration because it requires much less than any other of the many attempts to explain the play." Who is the murderer? That is the question! Hamlet fails to recognize Horatio immediately at their first meeting in the play and KEMP therefore assumes that Horatio must have left Wittenberg before Hamlet and killed the King so that his aspirations for an exalted position at court might be fulfilled when the Prince became king. The happy ending for Horatio who will gain as much under Fortinbras reveals Shakespeare as a great artist who knows that the wicked are not always punished. Hamlet's delay is therefore merely an outcome of his suspicions of the Ghost's story and "the promptings of his instincts or soul or subconscious, which are right. And the simplicity of the explanation is the measure of its superiority to the ingenious and fanciful theories hitherto proffered." ("Understanding 'Hamlet,'" *College English,* XIII:1, pp. 9-13, Oct. 1951.)

***(Your colleagues, students, or friends may be interested in* SNL. *Won't you please show them your copy?)***

### DRAMATIC GENRES

In an important article on dramatic genres, NORTHROP FRYE explains that "generic criticism is not an attempt at classification or pigeonholing, but at the systematic study of the formal causes of art." In his analysis of various genres, he discusses the merging of history, comedy and tragedy with references to Shakespeare's histories, the ironic in tragedy with references to *Troilus and Cressida, Hamlet,* and *King Lear,* masque elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest,* and broad comedy elements in various tragedies. ("A Conspectus of Dramatic Genres," *The Kenyon Review,* XIII:4, pp. 543-62, Autumn, 1951.)

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### SHAKESPEAREAN ECHO IN GOETHE

New echoes of Shakespeare in Goethe's *Faust* are noted by MURRAY ABEND of the U. of Alabama who cites "we are such stuff . . ." etc., *(Tempest,* IV.1.178-80) to compare with Goethe's "Lightly is thy life surrounded—Sleep's a shell to break and burn." Although the imagery is similar, Goethe uses it for a different purpose. ("A Shakespearean Image in Faust II," *N & Q,* 196:12, pp. 249-50, June 9, 1951.)

### PERFORMANCES AT SEA

By citing a source printed 24 years before the earliest previous known reference (1849) to the acting of *Hamlet* and *R II* aboard Capt. Wm. Keeling's ship in 1607-8, G. BLACKMORE EVANS of the University of Illinois, says that Capt. Keeling's log entries are now considered completely authentic. The Journal notes had been questioned by Sir Sidney Lee and treated as genuine by Chambers. The new evidence was discovered by Prof. Earl R. Wasserman of Johns Hopkins. ("The Authenticity of Keeling's Journal Entries on *'Hamlet'* and *'Richard II'*", *N & Q,* 196:15, pp. 313-15, July 21, 1951.)

***An Annual* SNL *Index will be issued***

### THE GHOST RECONSIDERED

J. Dover Wilson's contention that the Ghost in *Hamlet* "is Catholic . . . the only non-Protestant in the play" is strongly contested by ROY W. BATTENHOUSE of Indiana U. who finds the supposed purgatorial fires and the isolated bits of sacramental language inadequate proof. Seven reasons are put forth to prove that the Ghost has not come from a Catholic Purgatory. 1) The Ghost has not come to ask for prayer or release from the tormenting fires of his prison. 2) The Ghost's command for revenge does not reveal the required charity, even with regard to Gertrude. It is not God's quarrel but his own. 3) The Ghost's tale lacks Christian perspective and he almost makes himself a god ("celestial bed") from whom "Gertrude has apostasized." 4) By failing to comfort Hamlet, by failing to appear in brightness, by failing to leave them to heaven, and by failing to confess, the Ghost passes none of the Catholic tests listed by Lavater. 5) Hamlet wavers between accepting the Ghost as good or evil. The Ghost in the "cellarage" is also not characteristic of purgatory ghosts. 6) The Ghost is not considered Catholic by other characters especially Horatio who calls it "a guilty thing" and an 'extravagant and erring spirit." That Gertrude does not see the Ghost is a "dramatic sign of his . . . un-Catholic character." 7) The Ghost's own account of his purging and his description of purgatory makes it evident that it is more pagan than Christian. The cumulative weight of these seven points indicates that the Ghost has the marks of being a visitor from pagan purgatory abodes. He is as much Platonic "demon" as Senecan ghost or oracle and is shown as having limitations which would "disqualify him as a true mediator of Heaven's will." Shakespeare made an understandable Renaissance play by fusing the pre-Christian ghost of his source with superficial touches of nominal Christianity. ("The Ghost in 'Hamlet': A Catholic 'Linchpin'?," *Studies in Philology,* XLVIII: 2, pp. 161-192, April, 1951.)

### ELIZABETHAN LIFE IN CHANCERY RECORDS

C. J. SISSON objects to those who have a horror for facts and to others who tell what Shakespeare meant as though they had written the plays. Although we have no Time-Machine to take us back to Elizabethan times, a closer investigation into the records of the great Court of Chancery and its depositions will give us a fine insight into many of Shakespeare's meanings and the Elizabethan attitude toward concepts in the plays. Chancery records unfold the story of a man who divided his land among his three daughters and was subsequently treated as was King Lear; they tell of cures reminiscent of *All's Well;* they reveal customs of the Jewish colony in London; they explicate Elizabethan language, etc. Elizabethan life and literature come to life in these records and the work of exploration in them has but hardly begun. ("Elizabethan Life in Public Records," *The Listener* [London], pp. 998-9, June 21, 1951.

### SHAKESPEARE IN ITALY

For those interested in the influence of Shakespeare in Italy, N. ORSINI of the University of Wisconsin has written a brief review of recent Italian scholarship on Shakespeare. The influence of Italian scholars on problems in *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* is also mentioned. ("Shakespeare in Italy," *Comparative Literature,* III:2, pp. 178-80, Spring, 1951.)